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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Anniston woman graduates from JSU after being paralyzed in shooting**

JACKSONVILLE- An Anniston woman who was paralyzed five years ago after being shot multiple times by an ex-boyfriend is graduating from Jacksonville State University on May 1.

Zainab Sabree, 22, will graduate magna cum laude after earning her bachelor's degree in emergency management. Her next step is working toward earning a master's degree in public administration.

She said she is grateful to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services ( ADRS ), the state agency that serves people with disabilities, for helping her in reaching this significant milestone in her life.

Three of ADRS ' four major programs collaborated to assist Sabree in getting her life back on track. Working as a team, the programs were able to address her transportation, living, medical, and educational needs.

"I really thank the department for helping me rebuild my life by getting me out of my bed and back in school," Sabree said.

Her life changed July 15, 2004, when she agreed to meet an ex-boyfriend outside of a convenient store in Alexandria.

After she declined to get back together with him, he took out a gun and began shooting her. The shots hit her in the neck, back, and face. He left her for dead, as she struggled to hold on to her life.

After surviving the attack, Children's Rehabilitation Service ( CRS ), one program of ADRS , became aware of Sabree's case.

When Wanda Ross, her CRS social worker, met her, Sabree wore a body brace from her neck to the pelvis and was completely dependent on others for her personal care. Still, Ross was amazed with Sabree.

"The most striking characteristic I noticed was her lack of anger and bitterness," Ross said. "I saw a young woman whose life had been altered and yet I also saw a profound acceptance of her new state of being. Zainab is a confident lady who is comfortable with herself and her abilities."

CRS was able to assist Sabree with getting occupational and physical therapy and in acquiring a power wheelchair.

Vocational Rehabilitation Service, another ADRS program that helps people with disabilities in finding work, assisted Sabree with a driver's evaluation, modifications to her vehicle, tuition assistance, and a computer workstation to take classes from home.

A third ADRS program, the State of Alabama Independent Living ( SAIL ) Service, provided her with medical supplies, and a wheelchair ramp outside of her own place. She is living independently across the street from her parents help from a part-time attendant.

Ross, who plans to attend Sabree's graduation, said she is impressed with the young woman's achievements.

"Zainab doesn't pity herself, but sees life as it is, not as it was, nor as it should be," she said. "She has a strong will and steady determination to live her life to the fullest."

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services is the state agency whose mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.